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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PHILADELPHIA MAN, TWO ACCOMPLICES, ARRESTED FOR PURCHASING, ILLEGALLY SELLING 14 FIREARMS USING STOLEN ID; *The defendants attempted to purchase 14 additional firearms, which were intercepted and seized by law enforcement.*



TAALIBUDEEN ANDERSON



TARIQ ANDERSON



DAIJON GRIFFIN

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Aug. 10, 2023) — Pennsylvania Attorney General Michelle A. Henry and Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele announce the arrest of Taalibudeen “Taalib” Ibn Hasdn Anderson, 22 and Tariq Anderson, 23, both of the 5600 block of Boyer Street in Philadelphia; and Daijon Griffin, 21, of Wilmington, Del., on identity theft and gun trafficking charges related to the purchase of 14 firearms and the attempted purchase of 14 additional firearms using a stolen driver’s license and identity of an active-duty soldier.

The joint investigation by the Montgomery County Detective Bureau’s Violent Crimes Unit (VCU) and the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General Gun Violence Task Force began on July 3, 2023, when numerous straw purchasing indicators were noted by law enforcement related to 14 firearms purchased between June 17, 2023 and July 6, 2023. The investigation found that Taalibudeen Anderson made these firearms purchases using the stolen Pennsylvania driver’s license of “Shaheim Dontez Mitchell.” Detectives learned that the real Mitchell, who is in the Army stationed at Fort Indiantown Gap, lost his

wallet containing both his PA driver's license and military identification in April 2023 while visiting his mother, who lives in Philadelphia, near the residence of both Anderson defendants. Mitchell promptly reported the loss of his military ID to his Army superiors.

The investigation found that not long after Mitchell lost his wallet and identification, Taalibudeen Anderson began buying firearms, falsely identifying himself as "Shaheim Dontez Mitchell" on all of the necessary Application/Record of Sale forms. For the 14 firearms purchased, Taalibudeen Anderson ordered the firearms online through Whittaker Guns under the name of "Shaheim Dontez Mitchell" but with his own street address, email and phone number on the account.

As required by law, firearms must be shipped to a licensed firearms dealer for pickup and to conduct the background check through the Pennsylvania State Police. Taalibudeen Anderson had the online-purchased firearms shipped to TriTac Firearms in Wyndmoor, where he also provided the name and identification of "Shaheim Dontez Mitchell." Of importance is that the real Shaheim Dontez Mitchell is legally allowed to purchase firearms, while Taalibudeen Anderson and Tariq Anderson are persons not allowed to possess a weapon and therefore unable to legally buy firearms.

In addition to the successful acquisition of 14 firearms, Taalibudeen Anderson purchased an additional 14 firearms online from Whittaker Guns. Seven of the firearms were ready to pick up at TriTac Firearms in Wyndmoor on July 12, 2023. Taalibudeen Anderson and Tariq Anderson arrived at 2:05 p.m. at TriTac Firearms to complete the required paperwork. In the store, which was under surveillance by law enforcement, Taalibudeen Anderson again presented identification and filled out paperwork using the false name of "Shaheim Dontez Mitchell." The background check was delayed by law enforcement, and Taalibudeen Anderson left the gun store without the firearms via the ride-sharing service Lyft. The vehicle was pulled over by law enforcement, and Taalibudeen Anderson presented to detectives a Delaware identification card with his correct name of Taalibudeen Anderson. The Lyft driver consented to a search of the vehicle, and a wallet containing the identification of "Shaheim Dontez Mitchell" was found in the back seat where Taalibudeen Anderson was seated. Tariq Anderson, who was also in the Lyft vehicle, fled on foot and was later apprehended by law enforcement.

In addition to those seven seized firearms, detectives found that Taalibudeen Anderson had purchased seven more firearms online from Whitakker Guns on the morning of July 12, 2023, at 9:44 a.m. and 9:51 a.m., just hours before his arrest. Further, Whittaker Guns records show that he attempted to purchase another two firearms, which were not in stock. All 14 of the firearms that were charged as attempted purchases by Taalibudeen Anderson were seized by law enforcement.

A subsequent search of the residence shared by Taalibudeen and Tariq Anderson produced none of the 14 firearms they purchased but found 10 firearm boxes, eight of which had serial numbers correlated to firearms purchased by Taalibudeen Anderson using the false identification of "Shaheim Dontez Mitchell." Also found were numerous shipping boxes addressed to "Shaheim Dontez Mitchell" for online purchases of gun accessories and ammunition; numerous credit/bank cards in various names, including "Shaheim Dontez Mitchell"; and laptops, printers, checkbooks and blank security paperwork used for the identity theft and forgery operation.

"Gun trafficking defeats a key tool to prevent serious crime and puts our communities, and the people who live there, at risk. Not only did the defendants' alleged crimes

endanger the physical safety of Pennsylvanians, but they exploited the identity of a soldier serving our country,” said Attorney General Henry. “All Pennsylvanians have the right to feel safe in their home, and the neighborhoods where they live and work. I am grateful for our partnership with the Montgomery County District Attorney’s Office, which has resulted in the arrests of these dangerous men. Together we will continue to work hard to stop the sale of illegal guns and hold gun traffickers accountable for the damage they cause.”

Of the 14 firearms purchased by Taalibudeen Anderson, three firearms have been recovered by police:

- On July 16, 2023, Philadelphia Police arrested a defendant who lived on Boyer Street on drug trafficking charges and recovered a black Canik 9 mm semi-automatic weapon that was purchased by Taalibudeen Anderson on July 6, 2023.
- On July 16, 2023, Philadelphia Police recovered a tan FN Five-seven firearm during a traffic stop, which was purchased by Taalibudeen Anderson on July 1, 2023.
- On July 25, 2023, Philadelphia Police executed a search warrant on a vehicle that was involved in a July 22, 2023, shooting on Parrish Street and found a tan FN Five-seven firearm purchased by Taalibudeen Anderson on July 1, 2023.

Of importance to note is the short time between the purchase and pick up of the firearms and the date the firearm was recovered by law enforcement—in this case, these firearms were recovered in four, 15 and 24 days, which is indicative of straw purchasing and the subsequent illegal sale of the firearms.

“These defendants were arming criminals, plain and simple. And the actions of these criminals are made even worse by their taking advantage of a loss by a soldier serving our country,” said DA Steele. “The recovery by law enforcement of three of the 14 straw-purchased firearms within days of their purchase show how fast these illegal guns show up at crime scenes. This flow of illegal firearms onto the streets makes all of our communities less safe.”

This investigation, led by Montgomery County Detective Bureau's VCU and the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General Gun Violence Task Force (GVTF), had assistance from Springfield Township Police, Cheltenham Township Police and the Philadelphia Police Department SWAT.

All three defendants are charged with nearly 500 counts of felonies, including Corrupt Organization, Conspiracy, Firearms Ownership–Providing False Information, Sales of Firearms to Ineligible Transferee, Dealing in the Proceeds of Illegal Activities, Person Not to Possess a Firearm, Forgery, Identity Theft and Criminal Use of a Communications Facility, as well as hundreds of counts of misdemeanor charges.

Taalibudeen Anderson and Tariq Anderson were arraigned today before Magisterial District Judge Katherine E. McGill, who set bail at \$500,000 cash for each defendant. The defendants were unable to make bail and were remanded to the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. Under the Pre-Trial Services Program, there will be a bail review hearing tomorrow before a Court of Common Pleas judge.

Griffin was arrested in Wilmington, Del., by the U.S. Marshals Service Violent Crime Fugitive Task Force (Eastern PA and Delaware). He will be extradited to Montgomery County and will be arraigned following extradition.

A preliminary hearing for the Andersons is scheduled for noon, Aug. 29, 2023, before Judge McGill. The case will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Samantha Arena.

Approved for release:
Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.